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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses four questions about Professional Development Schools (PDSs). Regarding question 1, "What do we know?", there are approximately 1,035 P-12 schools designated as PDSs in 47 states. Research indicates that the PDSs help bridge the gap between university- and school-based educators. They also help practicing teachers experience greater professional growth and offer preservice teachers greater confidence in their skills and knowledge and more support during initial preparation. Regarding question 2, "What do we need to know?", five areas need attention: Do PDSs produce improvements in learning? What happens to teacher candidates who complete their initial preparation in PDSs? What does it cost to implement the complete range of PDS activities, and how does that compare to traditional approaches? How do we ensure that the benefits for PDS programs are not restricted to more affluent schools? What are PDSs doing to broaden the participation of neglected stakeholders? Regarding question 3, "How do we find out?", there must be a two-step approach involving (1) deliberation and self-study and (2) developing and implementing appropriate mechanisms and procedures for documenting and evaluating PDS effectiveness in critical areas. Regarding question 4, "Who do we tell?", it is important to tell colleagues, peers, students, parents, community members, administrators, policy makers, legislators, funders, and all PDS and non-PDS educators. (Contains 12 references.) (SM)

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOLS:
WHAT DO WE KNOW? WHAT DO WE NEED TO KNOW? HOW DO WE FIND OUT? WHO DO WE TELL?

by

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PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT SCHOOLS
What do we know? What do we need to know? How do we find out? Who do we tell?

This paper will address four major questions related to professional development schools: What do we know? What do we need to know? How do we find out? and Who do we tell?

In part, I take this approach to talking about professional development schools because it reflects the nature of my engagement with the PDS movement over the past 7 1/2 years. Since 1991, I have coordinated the Clinical Schools Clearinghouse, which is based at the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (AACTE) in Washington, DC. The clearinghouse is a national resource center, which collects, generates, and disseminates information on PDSs. We receive inquiries from students; school and college faculty; LEA, state, and federal staffers; journalists, and others. The print and electronic resources, workshops, conference sessions, and other activities we have produced or been a part of have sought to respond to the needs of our users and to answer their questions.

The answers, which I will suggest, to the aforementioned questions are based on my work with the clearinghouse; reviews of PDS literature; participation in various task forces, working groups, and committees; and conversations with individuals involved in PDS work.

I hope to raise a number of key issues, which I believe those involved in PDS work have a vested interest in examining. Each of these issues has both practical and moral or ethical dimensions. By moral, I refer to that which is fair, honest, just, and equitable. By practical, I mean that which is workable, feasible, and achievable. The eventual success of the PDS movement, in my opinion, depends on achieving a balance of the two—the moral and the practical—a balance that avoids diluting either to the point of insignificance.

If we neglect the moral dimensions of this work, PDSs run the risk of becoming mere tools for tinkering with the educational system in this country, a technical exercise that produces very little more than greater efficiency at doing what we have been doing all along. While education's accomplishments over the course of our nation's history have not been insignificant, there is compelling evidence that new thinking and new approaches are needed to respond to conditions for which our educational institutions were, in many respects, unprepared.

Without the practical dimension, we endanger the mission of PDSs and increase the likelihood that this movement, like others before it, will end up consigned to the scrapheap of forgotten experiments in education. Further, I believe an argument can be made that

when we arrive at the essence of morality and practicality, we find that reconciling the two is not a matter of trying to align opposites, but of recognizing that the two are inextricably joined. Fundamentally, when we work in the field of education, that which is fair, just, and equitable is practical; and that which is essentially practical is moral and ethical. Shortsighted attempts to implement economical, pragmatic solutions to persistent problems invariably rebound on us if those attempts are not morally sound.

Those of you who toil in PDS vineyards across the nation know the enormous toll this work takes on the workers, and it may seem unreasonable to ask so much of the work and of you. You have probably heard, as I have, calls from within and without the movement to be moderate and temperate in our expectations and goals. And while I am an advocate of moderation and temperance, I also agree with Mark Twain's statement, "Moderation in all things, even moderation." There are some causes which call for zeal, and I believe that educating children to be caring, thoughtful, careful, and productive stewards of one another, the earth, and democracy is one of those causes.

To establish a little common ground among us, I offer this brief summary of the mission of professional development schools. Professional development schools are functioning P-12 schools that have a four-part mission: (1) to develop, test, refine, and disseminate practices and structures that improve, advance, and support student learning and well-being; (2) to prepare new teachers and other school-based educators; (3) to support the professional development of practicing teachers and other school-based educators; and (4) to conduct applied inquiry that supports and advances student and educator learning. In part, what distinguishes PDSs from other schools and from their antecedents, such as lab schools or portal schools, are the integrated nature of these four elements and the collaborative approach to achieving the goals that derive from the mission. Each element nourishes and replenishes the other, and the entire enterprise is crippled by neglect of one or more elements. Without all four working together in concert, we have a facsimile of a PDS, which may accomplish some laudable things, but which is, nevertheless, underdeveloped if all aspects of the mission are not attended to.

What do we know?

THE LEVEL OF PDS ACTIVITY

The most recent count taken by the Clinical Schools Clearinghouse reveals approximately 1,035 individual P-12 schools designated as PDSs. These schools are found in 47 states; in urban, suburban, and rural areas; and include elementary, middle, and high schools, as

well as schools for exceptional learners and private and parochial schools. A majority of these schools participate in one or more networks—national networks such as the National Network for Educational Renewal (Clark, 1997) or the Holmes Partnership (Holmes Partnership, 1998); state networks, such as those found in Texas (Macy, Macy, & Kjelgaard, 1996), Maryland (Clemson-Ingram & Fessler, 1997) , Massachusetts (Teitel & DelPrete, 1995), South Carolina (Gottesman, Graham, & Nogy, 1993), North Carolina, and Missouri. There are also regional networks, such as the Four Cities Urban PDS Network, which includes partnerships affiliated with University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, University of Chicago-Chicago Circle, Roosevelt University, University of Detroit-Mercy, and Cleveland State University. This number (1,035) represents an increase of more than 800% in the number we identified in our first national survey in 1992 and roughly a 300% increase since our 1995 national survey (Abdal-Haqq, 1995). This increase is dramatic; yet it underestimates the total because it includes only those schools for which we have some documentation. We are currently making preliminary plans to conduct a third national survey, the results from which we expect to publish in the spring of 1999.

PDS EFFECTIVENESS

We have more evidence of PDS impact on preservice teacher education than on other aspects of the PDS mission. In general, preservice preparation in PDS settings includes longer, more thoughtful, coherent, and relevant field experiences than in traditional programs. It is more likely to incorporate research-based practices and structures such as student teacher cohorts, clinical supervision models, and portfolio assessments; and it typically involves shared responsibility, between school and college faculty, for initial preparation. When compared to their peers, graduates of PDS preservice programs report greater confidence in their skills and knowledge, less culture shock when they enter classrooms as professionals, and more support during their initial preparation. We have some evidence that principals and school districts consider PDS graduates to be attractive hires, that graduates perform well on state licensing exams and in the classroom, and are more likely to "hit the ground running" when they begin professional practice.

We also have a number of studies suggesting that practicing teachers in PDS settings experience greater professional growth, more opportunities to exercise leadership, and greater feelings of empowerment, related to their ability to affect their schools and their profession, than teachers in comparable non-PDS settings. There is some evidence that PDSs create conditions that promote a culture of inquiry, investigation, and active, ongoing learning for school-based educators. [See Abdal-Haqq (1998) for a discussion of what PDS literature reveals about activities and outcomes related to teacher development.]

There is considerable documentation that the PDS movement has done much to bridge the gap between university- and school-based educators. It has provided the institutional

setting where these two longtime acquaintances who used to pass each other on the street with averted eyes, or at the most a civil nod, now break bread together and engage in joint effort. This collaboration, which is a distinguishing feature of PDSs, is also an enabling condition, which makes it possible to fulfill the mission. We can see the importance that PDS implementers attach to meaningful collaboration in the formal agreements that many partnerships have crafted to enable their work. [See Teitel (1998) for a discussion of the various institutional arrangements found among PDS partnerships.] Also, the draft standards for PDSs developed by the NCATE PDS Standards Project cite the existence of formal agreements to support parity and collaboration as a threshold condition for PDS development.

Despite the considerable information we have accumulated over the last decade, there remain several vital unknowns—things that we need to know if the work is to continue and produce the harvest we hope for.

What do we need to know?

There are many murky areas of PDS development and implementation which would reward more study; however, I would like to briefly highlight five critical questions, which I believe merit our attention.

The most pressing question confronting PDS implementers and advocates is whether the professional development school produces improvements in the learning, learning-related behavior, and well-being of children—the students in the PDS itself, as well as students in the larger education community. Do more effective preservice clinical experiences, greater opportunities for professional development among practicing teachers, and increased collaboration between schools and colleges—all of which we have some evidence that PDSs are providing— translate into positive change for students?

While the overall amount of convincing data is meager, we do have scattered reports of PDS accomplishments in the area of student learning. For example, some encouraging descriptive data have emerged from a 1996 evaluative study of the PDS network in Texas, which includes 412 PDSs (Macy, Macy, & Kjelgaard, 1996). The report, which was commissioned by the Texas Education Agency, indicates students in several of the network's PDSs showed significant growth on state K-12 basic skills assessments. A longitudinal assessment of five PDSs in the Benedum Collaborative in West Virginia also indicated impressive gains in student achievement (Webb-Dempsey, n.d.). We can find in the PDS literature isolated reports of improved writing, math, and reading scores among elementary students in PDSs, reduced drop-out rates, and lower incidences of antisocial behavior, as well as other positive accomplishments [See Abdal-Haqq (1998) for a discussion of PDS literature on student learning.] However, such reports are isolated,

scattered, and insufficiently aggregated to provide the convincing evidence needed to buttress claims that PDSs, in general, provide significant benefits to students.

The second unanswered critical question about PDSs relates to what happens to teacher candidates who complete their initial preparation in PDS settings. Is there less attrition among PDS graduates; do they seek employment and remain in inner-city, rural, or other schools were there are critical needs; do they carry with them the practices learned during their preservice studies?

Critical question number three is related to cost and financing. What does it actually cost to implement the complete range of PDS activities, and how do these costs compare to more traditional approaches to the same functions? Although we find very little material in the PDS literature on the subject of costs and financing, the little we do have suggests that start-up costs may average $50,000 per year over a 2-year period, (Clark, 1996), and ongoing costs may average 10% above the cost of traditional arrangements (Theobold, 1991, cited in Clark, 1996). Without careful and accurate documentation of costs, as well as thoughtful consideration of approaches to financing that do not rely on transitory funds, PDS implementers will be hampered in one of their major tasks—to demonstrate that the PDS performs better or more cost-effectively a function that each contributing partner values.

A fourth critical question concerns equity—equity in policy and practice for all learners and stakeholders involved in the PDS enterprise. Many PDSs have been deliberately established in inner-city and rural communities with significant populations of children from low-income communities and from African, Asian/Pacific Island, Latino, and Native American communities. We also have PDS partnerships working with special learners who have learning, emotional, or physical impairments. Do the distinctive qualities of the PDS create effective settings for addressing the instructional needs of these children? Because the challenges, and in some cases the costs, of mounting a PDS program tend to be greater in resource-poor schools, how do we ensure that the benefits we claim for PDS programs are not restricted to more affluent schools?

PDS implementers link much of the improvement in their preservice programs to longer, more intense clinical, field-based work and to more rigorous entry and exit standards. Preparation programs that require candidates to devote more time to field work often prove burdensome for poor and working-class students who must combine study with work or who must begin earning as soon as possible. Because minority students are disproportionately represented within these categories of students, the format of PDS preservice programs can result in these students opting out or dropping out of such programs, which negatively impacts efforts to increase the dwindling supply of teachers of color at a time when the population of students of color is growing (*Task Force,* 1997). By

the same token, entry and exit requirements that rely heavily on standardized tests to determine readiness or proficiency often limit access for teacher candidates from certain racial, ethnic, and linguistic groups who historically have lower pass rates on such exams. We have very little information about what PDS partnerships are doing to address this issue.

Finally, what are PDS settings doing to broaden and deepen the participation of neglected stakeholders—specifically, parents, community members, and students themselves? Can PDSs devise structures, processes, and practices that tap the knowledge, expertise, and insights of parents, community members, and students? Can PDSs model approaches to engagement that move the school and university beyond their traditional paternal role to the status of partners who engage students, families, and communities as equals in mutual problem solving?

How do we find out?

In my opinion, finding answers to the critical questions I have posed requires a two-step approach. The first step involves deliberation and self-study—examining what has been done and considering what is planned to place children at the center of the enterprise; determining the extent to which the needs and interests of the students in the PDS and the students in the localities the PDS is intended to serve guide efforts to actualize each of the four elements of the PDS mission.

One of the most useful documents I have encountered in PDS literature is an essay by Ellen Pechman (1992), "The Child as Meaning-Maker: The Organizing Principle for Professional Practice Schools." Pechman begins by summarizing recent findings from the cognitive sciences about how children learn best. She offers examples of practices and arrangements that reflect the principles she outlines and concludes with a discussion of how the principles and practices might look when operationalized in a professional practice school setting. Pechman's essential premise is embodied in the essay's title, "The Child as Meaning-Maker: The Organizing Principle for Professional Practice Schools." What the child needs in order to learn becomes both the starting point and the standard for gauging subsequent planning and activity. The content and format of initial preparation, professional development, applied inquiry, as well as classroom instruction and school organization are dictated by conscious attention to student needs. In addition, the enabling conditions—e.g., time, money, staffing, governance structures—which support these program elements are also considered with the child's needs in mind.

This approach is very different from an approach that takes for granted that altered methods of preparing teachers and changed relationships between schools and colleges will automatically produce higher performing students—the "trickle down" theory. It is also

very different from an approach that says, in effect, "Let's take it one step at a time and get the teacher education piece in place first."

The second step in answering the critical questions is to develop and put into place appropriate mechanisms and procedures for documenting and evaluating PDS effectiveness in critical areas. The most critical area is impact on students.

I recently participated in a small meeting jointly sponsored by a coalition of organizations involved in PDS activity and a group of individuals representing various state departments of education, education policy advisors to governors, school district superintendents, and others who operate at the state policy level. During the two-day meeting, a recurring theme was the need for data—upfront data to support requests for funds, endorsement or other support, as well as summative and evaluative data to demonstrate accomplishments. The desire for student impact data was considered the most compelling need. One of the more frequent questions we get at the clearinghouse is how do we know that PDSs work?

PDS implementers, as well as other educators, resist efforts to evaluate impact on students through standardized tests. I believe reservations about the appropriateness of standardized tests are valid and warranted. However, we find very few accounts in PDS literature that efforts are underway to devise reliable alternative methods for assessing student achievement or determining if PDSs have a positive effect on student populations.

In my opinion, PDSs are in position to provide an enormous service to the education community and America's children if they see themselves as laboratories for studying and devising solutions to persistent problems in education. And there are few problems more compelling than the scarcity of fair, equitable, and meaningful methods of assessing student development.

In addition to documenting impact on student, PDS implementers need to conduct longitudinal investigations that track teacher candidates who receive their initial preparation in PDS settings. Data are needed on attrition, performance, retention, and employment in critical localities. Also, approaches to establishing links between teacher development and student achievement should be considered. The importance of these kinds of data was also highlighted by the state and district policymakers mentioned earlier.

Who do we tell?

First, we tell one another. I'm sure everyone here acknowledges that teaching and working with children in schools can be very taxing. Active involvement in a PDS more often than not increases both the physical and emotional strain on school and college faculty. All too often, time for conferencing, supervision, professional development activities, planning,

and research has to be squeezed from existing schedules. There are a number of accounts in school reform literature in general, and PDS literature in particular, of teachers who wearily inquire if all of these "extra" demands are making a difference for their students. So, when there is good news , we should make sure that those on the front lines hear it first.

We also tell colleagues and peers in schools and universities. A major distinguishing feature of the PDS, compared to a school which hosts student teachers in traditional fashion, is that the education of novice teachers, as well as other aspects of PDS work, is ideally a whole-school enterprise. While this sort of whole-school buy-in exists in some PDSs, the general trend tends to be a cadre of very active school and college faculty surrounded by colleagues who are either marginally engaged, vaguely aware, or totally ignorant about what's going on. Relating progress and accomplishments can encourage more active participation on the part of doubters or those who take a wait-and-see attitude and promote interest among colleagues who are uninformed.

We tell students, parents, and community members in order to acknowledge their efforts in achieving success and to encourage continued support.

We tell administrators, policymakers, legislators, and funders; and we present the information minus the "educatorese" for which the policymakers I referred to earlier criticized us.

We tell PDS and non-PDS educators outside of our immediate circle. We share with our networks and with our colleagues through journals and reports, conference presentations, and meetings like this what we have learned that will support and advance the work. A number of writers who have explored the historical background of the PDS movement have commented that the importance of laboratory schools, portal schools, and other PDS antecedents dwindled, in part, because of insufficient documentation and dissemination of accomplishments. Dissemination has both moral and practical value. Although PDSs are not designed to be replicated in full by every school in the land, they should share with the broader community workable practices and policies that promote student learning. Doing so is one way that PDSs can demonstrate service to the local district, as opposed to merely being one of a few "super schools" hoarding knowledge and resources.

Finally, when you find answers to critical questions, you tell those in resource centers like the Clinical Schools Clearinghouse, which is dedicated to helping you and others remain informed about this very important work.

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